

Small Group Guide THE CHURCH AT BROOK HILLS (PART 2)

The Church at Brook Hills

Dr. David Platt

September 14, 2014

1 Corinthians 15

Use this resource as a tool to help Christ-followers move forward in their spiritual growth. To do this well requires that the Small Group Leader is building a relationship with the individuals in the small group and has identified where the people are in their relationship with God. Are they Christ-followers? Are they growing in Christ? If so, in what areas do they need to grow further? As disciple-makers, Small Group Leaders shepherd people to know the truth of Scripture, to understand why it matters, and to apply it to their lives. Small Group Leaders come alongside those whom they disciple to discover how loving God, loving each other, and loving those not yet in the Kingdom should shape how they live. The structure of this resource coincides with moving people from knowledge (Main Truth) to understanding (Why It Matters) to application (Now What Do We Do?). Utilize this Small Group Guide as a flexible teaching tool to inform your time together and not as a rigid task list.

GETTING STARTED

Before Small Group

Weekly Readings for September 15-21

2 Samuel 11-17 and 2 Corinthians 4-10

Where We Are In The Story ~ Old Testament (2 Samuel)

Background of 2 Samuel: Originally, 1 and 2 Samuel were one book but were divided into two books (probably because of length) in the Septuagint (LXX), the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Written by an unknown author, 2 Samuel chronicles the reign of King David from the death of Saul to his census of the people.

Structure of 2 Samuel:

- 1 Samuel 1-5 describes the transition of leadership from Saul's family to David.
- 1 Samuel 6-7 includes God's covenant with David.
- 1 Samuel 8-20 contains descriptions of God's faithfulness to Israel as well as God's judgment of David for his sin.
- 1 Samuel 21-24 records David's praise of God and his response to punishment for his sin.

This Week in 2 Samuel: 2 Samuel 11-20 describes David's moral failure and the consequences that stem from his actions, and the tentative date for David's adultery is 992 B.C., which was about nineteen years into his reign. The beginning of 2 Samuel records David's Ammonite wars, and this would have been the enemy that the Israelites were fighting in 2 Samuel 11 (see 2 Sam. 10). The progression of sin in this chapter can be marked by the verb "sent" (vv. 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 18, 22, 27). David had "sent" Joab his captain into battle at a time "when kings go out to battle" (v. 1). When from his rooftop he happened to see a woman bathing, he "sent and inquired" about her (v. 3), and although he learned that she was the daughter of one of his trusted advisers and the *wife* of one of his valiant men (see 2 Sam. 23:34), he "sent" for her to come to him. After their affair, she "sent" to David the news of her pregnancy (v. 5), and in an attempt to cover up his sin, he "sent" for Uriah to report to him, hoping he would spend the night with his wife and the baby could be passed off as his (v. 6). When his plan failed, David "sent" word to Joab to put Uriah in a position where he would be killed in battle (v. 14), and while Uriah did die, other Israelite men were also needlessly killed in battle – collateral damage of David's cover-up scheme. When this plan succeeded, David "sent" for Bathsheba and made her his wife (v. 27). This action verb emphasizes David's deliberate disobedience, and God found his actions to be reprehensible (v. 27). In response, the Lord "sent" Nathan to announce His judgment to David (2 Sam. 12:1). These judgments included:

- David's family would face strife and death because he had killed Uriah the Hittite in order to take his

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wife (v. 9-12). Throughout Scripture, God practices talionic justice (an eye for an eye), and He demonstrates talionic justice in this judgment. Because David had inflicted death and, thus, severed a family, death and betrayal would wrench his own family. While David had an affair with another man's wife, the same would be done with his wives – but it would be public knowledge. This occurred in 2 Samuel 16:15-23 when David's son Absalom staged a rebellion that caused David to flee Jerusalem, and to demonstrate his authority, Absalom appropriated his father's concubines who had been left at the palace, which in the ancient near east symbolized the shift of power to a new ruler.

- Bathsheba's child would die (vv. 14).
 - Because of David's response to this child's death, 2 Samuel 12 is often used in discussions concerning what happens to children when they die. For more about this topic, read Pastor David's paper entitled "The Incarnation and Children's Hospital" on: brookhills.org/contribute/IncarnationandChildrensHospital.pdf.

When confronted with his sin, David's response distinguishes him from King Saul, for instead of making excuses for himself, David acknowledged his sin, recognizing that his actions were ultimately against God (v. 13). God's forgiveness of David was immediate (v. 13), which reiterates the sincerity of David's confession and points to the graciousness of God, and Psalm 51 provides further evidence of David's contrition over his actions and his petition to God for restoration in his relationship with Him.

The remainder of this week's passages in 2 Samuel concern Absalom's rebellion. The son of David's wife Maacah (see 2 Sam. 3:1-3), Absalom's rebellion was triggered by the rape of his sister Tamar by their half-brother Amnon who was the current heir to the throne (2 Sam. 13). Although aware of Amnon's actions (2 Sam. 13:21), David took no action against him, probably because David recognized his own hypocrisy if he tried, which still does not excuse the lack of discipline. Enraged by Amnon's actions, Absalom spent two years plotting his revenge, and after killing Amnon, Absalom fled to his grandfather's home in Geshur where he lived for three years (2 Sam. 13:34-39). Although Joab brought him back to Jerusalem, Absalom remained estranged from his father for two additional years, which provided time for Absalom to begin politicking and planning his rebellion (2 Sam. 14-15). During this time, even Ahithophel, David's trusted advisor, joined Absalom's conspiracy (2 Sam. 15:12).

As he fled from Jerusalem, David learned of Ahithophel's defection, and along with his prayer for God to turn Ahithophel's counsel into foolishness, David hatched a plan to send Hushai, a friend and advisor, to join Absalom's inner circle and to counter Ahithophel's counsel as well as to pass along intelligence information to David through the priests (1 Sam. 15:30-37). This plan worked, and Hushai's actions led to David's protection from a military attack (2 Sam. 17). Throughout the turmoil in David's family and in the country, Yahweh remained faithful to his covenant to David as well as to His promise to punish David for his sin.

Where We Are In The Story ~ New Testament (2 Corinthians)

Background of 2 Corinthians: In 1 Corinthians, we learn that Paul sent Timothy to Corinth because of his concerns about this church (1 Cor. 4:17; 16:10). Timothy's experiences in Corinth prompted Paul to visit these believers in what he describes as a "painful visit" (2 Cor. 2:1), particularly because of his interactions with an unnamed Corinthian (2 Cor. 2:5-11). This visit led Paul to write a "severe letter" to the Corinthians (see 2 Cor. 2:3; 7:8-12), which has been lost, so 2 Corinthians is actually the third letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. This letter was meant to prepare the Corinthians for his impending visit, which is described in Acts 20:3. Opponents of Paul who were preaching a false gospel also materialized in Corinth (2 Cor. 3:1; 11:4), and Paul provides a defense of his ministry in 2 Corinthians because of the accusations of these "super apostles" (2 Cor. 10-12). His defense leads to the theme in this letter of God's power and sufficiency despite human weakness.

This Week in 2 Corinthians: Unlike 1 Corinthians, this book seems a little disorganized in that Paul often circles back to further discuss previous subjects, but throughout the letter, he defends himself against the claims of the false teachers in Corinth. Their allegations against Paul involve the following:

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- They claimed to be on par with Paul and the other apostles and trusted teachers, if not superior to them, because of the message that they preached (2 Cor. 11:12-15). Because of this, Paul refers them as “super-apostles” and “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5, 13; 12:11).
- The false teachers advocated righteousness based on the old covenant (2 Cor. 3). This means that they were Judaizers or those who urged Gentile Christians to live like Jews by keeping the law, specifically circumcision and food laws, and they did not understand the freedom that came in Christ (see also Rom. 8:1-11).
- Paul vacillated in his travel plans to Corinth because of God’s leading and other circumstances that arose, and as a result, the false teachers brought into question his word and his care for the Corinthians (2 Cor. 1:12-22; 2:12-17).
- The false teachers brought letters of recommendation with them while Paul had none (2 Cor. 3:1-3; 4:1-2). Paul points out that, unlike these traveling teachers, he did not charge the Corinthians for his teaching (2 Cor. 11:7; 12:14-18).
- The false teachers valued and praised outward skills such as a strong presence and speaking skills and valued these more than the content of one’s heart (2 Cor. 5:12; 10:7-12; 11:1-6). They boasted in themselves, their skills, and their accomplishments, but Paul responds by quoting Jeremiah 9:24 and stating that the only boasting that should occur is boasting in the Lord (2 Cor. 10:17).

2 Corinthians 4 continues the discussion from chapter three in which Paul is defending his ministry, and this can be seen in how he starts the section off with the theme of commending/recommendation (see 2 Cor. 3:1-2; 4:1-2; 5:12; 6:4). The false teachers in Corinth would have carried letters of introduction from powerful friends, and such letters were used to open doors for these teachers in a new city. Because they were teachers, they would have relied on the Corinthians to financially support them in return for their instruction (see 2 Cor. 2:17; 11:7-11, 20; 12:13-18). These teachers emphasized resources such as the letters of recommendation or impressive oratorical skills as indicators of validity and success, and they criticized Paul for not having either.

In 2 Corinthians 4, Paul points out that by focusing on such outward, earthly measures, the teachers were attending to what is temporary and visible instead of what is eternal and invisible. In God’s program, He uses “jars of clay” or what is weak to show His strength (2 Cor. 4:7), and this perspective highlights God’s ability to work through human suffering to accomplish His purpose. In the midst of sickness, affliction, and death, believers can hope and look towards the day when we will be raised with Christ and receive the inheritance promised to us (2 Cor. 4:8-5:5). Living in light of what is eternal requires the believer to “walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), which is in contrast to the actions and teachings of the false teachers in Corinth (2 Cor. 5:12).

This leads Paul to rehearse the gospel. Those who are in Christ are a new creation and are reconciled to God (2 Cor. 5:16-18), and as a result of our peace with God, we join Him in His work by becoming “ambassadors for Christ” and telling others of God’s offer of forgiveness and reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-21). In light of the gospel, Paul urges the Corinthians “not to receive the grace of God in vain” (2 Cor. 6:1-2). As recipients of God’s grace, our lives should line up with God’s truth and purpose. Regarding Paul’s description of ministry in 2 Corinthians 6:4-10, P.E. Hughes writes the following in his commentary on this epistle:

This movingly beautiful hymn-like passage flows from the deep heart of the Apostle’s knowledge and experience...It challenges every serious reader to re-examine as before God his own relationship to the crucified, risen, and ascended Lord and with redoubled earnestness to dedicate his life and talents afresh to the single-minded prosecution of the cause of Christ.

The context about not being yoked with unbelievers in 2 Corinthians 6 has to do with the temple cults in Corinth (although it can also refer to the false teachers), and it has implications for all human relationships, including dating/marriage relationships (so this text dissuades missionary dating as well as marrying an unbeliever). Separation does not mean that we avoid all contact with unbelievers, for that would prohibit our involvement in God’s mission. Paul’s use of the words “yoked,” “partnership,” and “fellowship” (2 Cor. 6:14)

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provide a picture of the type of relationship that Paul is meaning, for these words give the idea of combining or allying ourselves with unbelievers. The basis for this instruction is found in our reconciliation with God (2 Cor. 5). Because we are in relationship with Him and because He resides in us (2 Cor. 6:16), we should avoid any union with anything that opposes Him. Instead, our lives should honor and reflect the One who has saved us.

In this letter, Paul also includes instructions regarding a collection for the poor believers in Jerusalem. This had originally been communicated to the Corinthians in his first letter (1 Cor. 16:1, 3), and Paul intended to pick up the Corinthians' offering when he came through the city. Other churches in the region had also contributed to this offering (see Rom. 15:26; Gal. 2:10), and when they first had word of this need, the Corinthians were enthusiastic about giving (2 Cor. 8:10-11). However, they had ceased in their efforts to raise funds for this collection, which is why Paul wrote to spur them on and included the example of the Macedonians who gave to the offering out of their own poverty (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Paul is not just concerned with their giving; he also attends to their attitude in giving (2 Cor. 9:7). Paul roots his discussion on giving in the grace of God, for sincere generosity is evidence of God's work in our hearts (2 Cor. 9:13). Also, in giving the believer demonstrates faith in God's provision and recognizes that He is the reason why we have means to give in the first place. The discussion of giving can be a sensitive subject in the church, and for more teaching on this subject, listen to Pastor David's sermon on 2 Corinthians 8-9 entitled "The Cross and Christian Generosity" (radical.net).

During Small Group

Welcome – Incorporate time for greeting one another, enjoying any refreshments, and making announcements. If guests are visiting, make introductions and help them feel welcomed. Ask for their contact information, so you can follow up with them.

Looking Back – Provide an opportunity for small group members to share what God is teaching them, how they are applying what they are learning, and how He has given them opportunities to share the gospel with others. This can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups. Do the people know each other well enough to share more than surface level information? How can time together be used to foster deeper relationships among those in the small group? Also, what are the struggles and needs of the people in the small group? How can the people in the small group sacrificially serve each other?

Looking Up – Hold prayer as fundamental to small group time rather than supplemental to it. Give adoration and thanksgiving to God in prayer. Submit yourself to Him, confessing sin. Petition God for personal needs and other requests. Pray for the disciple-making efforts of those in the group and for the salvation of the lost in each other's families, spheres of influence, and in the world. The Weekly Prayer Focus below can also be incorporated in the group's prayer time.

Weekly Prayer Focus (from Our Worship Guide)

- *Pray for Our Lives: Praise God for Jesus' resurrection. Pray we will all look to Jesus as our example of obedience to God. Pray for the advancement of God's Kingdom through our obedience to His will and fulfillment of His mission. Ask God to use the reality of death to awaken within us a sense of urgency to spread the gospel to those who have not heard. Pray for the day when all will know Jesus is King and He will receive all glory on earth. Pray for those you know who have not yet turned from themselves and trusted in Christ to be more open to the gospel.*
- *Pray for Our City: This week we are praying for Brook Hills members who share God's Word with the men and women at Birmingham City Jail every Tuesday evening. We are also praying for 16th Street Baptist Church and Arthur Price, Pastor.*

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- *Pray for Our World: This week we are praying for our Pastor, David Platt, and his family as they transition into his new role as IMB President. We praise God for the last eight years that David, Heather, and their children have led our faith family at The Church at Brook Hills. God has been faithful to our church and to the Platt family. We give all glory to Him and anticipate His faithfulness in the days to come. Join us this week as we pray for our pastor and his family. This week we are also praying for our Brook Hills short-term team serving in Southeast Asia.*

MAIN TRUTH

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Three Reasons to Hold Fast to the Gospel with Radical Faith...

- Because death is coming.
 - Our death is coming.
 - Others' death is coming.
- Because resurrection is real.
 - If Jesus wasn't raised from the dead...
 - Our faith is futile and we stand guilty before God.
 - Our message is false and our mission is destructive.
 - Those who have died in Christ have been damned before God.
 - Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith is to be pitied in this world.
 - Because Jesus was raised from the dead...
 - Our faith is well-founded and we stand forgiven before God.
 - Our message is true and our mission is urgent.
 - Those who have died in Christ now dwell with God.
 - Radical, sacrificial, risk-taking faith is to be envied in this world.
- Because of where all history is headed.
 - At this moment, Jesus has dominion over all things.
 - He became the victorious King through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience to God.
 - He is advancing His kingdom through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking children of God.
 - One day soon, Jesus will deliver over all things...
 - The enemies of God will finally be defeated.
 - The glory of God will forever be exalted.

Message Summary

Today's message represents Pastor David's last Sunday preaching at The Church at Brook Hills as the Senior Pastor. As a continuation of his message to the church during his time of transition, Pastor David reminds Brook Hills of the reason that we are called to hold fast to the gospel through radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience to God. He urges the church not to drift into a comfortable, religious spin on the "American dream" but to die daily to selfish pleasures in pursuit of what matters to God: glorifying Him by making disciples of all nations. In a world where over two billion people have never had a chance to respond to the gospel and where statistics cry out about the spiritual and physical needs that plague souls around the globe, there is a dire need for the hope of Jesus Christ in the gospel. There is dire need for the children of God to rise up in obedience to be the hands and feet of Jesus across national and international borders. The need is real, and the gospel is what makes a difference. The gospel is worth radical obedience not only because our death is ultimately imminent but because others who have not heard the gospel are dying. Also, the gospel is true. Christ died and rose again, sins can be forgiven, and eternity with God is real. People should have a

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chance to respond to this truth. Christ's kingdom is here now in part. He has dominion over all things, but the destruction of God's enemies has not been finalized. But it will be, and the glory of God will be exalted for all of eternity. To that end, we do not stop fighting the battles of this war that has already been won.

WHY IT MATTERS

Digging Deeper

As the leader, there are at least three directions the small group can take in light of the current Bible reading plan. Knowing the people in the group, prayerfully consider what would be the best route to help those in your group grow. The group's meetings could also vary with each week, so if one week's sermon prompts a lot of thought and discussion, option one could be what the group does that week while the next week could be different. As the leader, feel the freedom to take all or just some of the content in this guide and do what is best for your group.

- *Using the discussion questions below, the small group time can focus on discussing the sermon and how to apply it.*
- *The group can discuss the Bible readings from the past week. If choosing this route, ensure that the group does not simply discuss information but also focuses on how to apply what they have learned from the Bible readings. The information in the "Where We Are in the Story" section can assist the leader in knowing the background and context for the readings.*
- *Using the REAP (read, examine, apply, pray) outline for studying Scripture, the group can take one or both passages from that day's readings and discuss them. So if the group meets on Monday, then you could pick one or both of the passages for Monday. This also helps those who are new to studying the Bible or who struggle with reading it learn how to do so. To assist the group with REAP questions, download the Guide to Personal Worship from brookhills.org.*

Last week, Pastor David noted that the church is not founded or based on a man. Rather, the church's foundation is Christ, and the mission given by God drives Brook Hills to obey Him to glorify God by making disciples around the world. Paul wrote to his brothers and sisters in Corinth and told them to remain faithful to the task, reminding them that their work was not in vain. Pastor David ended his last sermon as the Senior Pastor at Brook Hills with the same reminder from 1 Corinthians 15:58. Lead your group to discuss the implications of a "radical, sacrificial, risk-taking obedience" to God. Discuss with your group how this mission can become tiresome and make us weary. Why is it so easy to lose the zeal for fulfilling this purpose?

Inherent in the life of a Christ-follower is the certainty that friends, family, church staff, and others whom we love will move to various places and change jobs and ministry settings. It is simply unavoidable when we are part of a body who chooses to follow the calling of God over temporary comforts of this world. But, still, it can seem lonely and painful—for those who leave and for those who are called to stay. How can we pray for those who leave? How can we pray for those who stay? Spend some time praying for both sets of people today and for how they can join in partnership together with the gospel while remaining faithful to share it with the world.

NOW WHAT DO WE DO?

Group Discussion & Application

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

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- Read 1 Corinthians 15:30. Paul literally risked his safety and his life a multitude of times for preaching the gospel. What does his commitment tell us about Paul's belief in the gospel and its power to change lives?
- Is it possible to believe in the truth of the gospel to change lives for eternity and *not* allow it to impact our lives? What does it look like when the gravity of the gospel takes hold of someone's heart and life? What did it look like in Paul's life? In Christ's life?
- Describe the differences between a nominal Christian and a Christian who is holding fast to the gospel with radical faith. How can we as a church avoid slipping into nominal Christianity? How can you as a Christ-follower avoid drifting towards this in your own life?
- When following Christ costs us little, what temptations often take control of our lives and become our idols?
- Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26. How does the certainty of death (but the uncertainty of when we will die) impact the way that we value each day of our life? How do our priorities and values shift when we recognize the biblical truth that our lives are short upon this earth? What needs to change in your life for you not to waste the time that God has given you on this earth?
- In a world that has global information at our fingertips, we can become hardened to the needs of the world even as they simultaneously shock us. How can we foster a sense of urgency in our hearts for those who need to hear the gospel?
- How would our daily lives change if we woke up each morning with the intent not to waste the time that God has given us on earth? How would our major life decisions change? How would the way we parent change? How would the way we work change? How would the way we interact with others change?
- Paul stated in Romans 15:20-21 that he was called by God to take the gospel to those who had not heard. Discuss what this tells us about God's heart for the lost and Paul's stake in the truth of the gospel?
- How can we develop a love for the lost directly around us and around the world? How can we lead our families to pray for and go to those who need to hear the gospel? Discuss this as a family and brainstorm ideas together about how you can be more intentional in praying for and sharing with the lost.
- Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:16-19 that if Christ had not been raised from the dead, His followers are to be pitied above all people. What assumptions does this statement make about the Christian life? What is it truly about? What should it look like to a watching world? In 1 Corinthians 15:20-23, Paul continued his discourse about Christ's resurrection, boldly proclaiming its truth and power. How does the truth of the resurrection impact the faith and actions of Christians? Are you living in such a way that the world would pity you if Christianity were not true? What does such a life even look like? Or are you living in such a way that the world cannot even tell that you are different or that you are a Christ-follower?
- God is in control, but He has invited His children to take their responsibility of salvation seriously. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. Does salvation have more of a purpose than to make us happy? Looking at the life of Jesus as Paul described in 1 Corinthians 15, what kind of purpose did His sacrifice have? How does that inform our purpose in obeying God?
- In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul states that Christ is King over all the earth and that He has won the war over evil, although we still battle the effects of sin for now. How does knowing how it all will end encourage us as we daily fight against the effects of sin and the attacks of the adversary?
- Paul exhorted the Corinthians to remain faithful to the Lord and His gospel, fully believing that they did not work in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). Why does evil in the world around us bring doubt about God and about the certainty of the gospel? How can we find strength and courage to keep fighting in the certainty of God's sovereign dominion and ultimate reign over all the earth? What does it practically look like on a daily basis for you to be "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (v. 58)?